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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 000559

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [GH](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA CHOOSES PUBLIC SILENCE ON IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 71798 (NODIS)

[1](#)B. STATE 70678

Classified By: Ambassador Mary C. Yates, reason 1.5 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador Yates delivered reftel B demarche on possible NAM involvement in a UNGA Special Session on Iraq to Foreign Minister Hackman Owusu-Agyemang on March 19. Ambassador stressed the counterproductive nature of any such session while the Security Council remains seized with the issue, and that the USG and its coalition partners had sufficient legal authority to disarm Iraq under several Security Council resolutions. The Minister replied that Ghana was, "off the record," in sympathy with the USG on Iraq. Given what he termed "national politics" and the tremendous pressure the GOG was under from various sources, NAM, Africa Group and others to oppose any intervention in Iraq, the GOG would not make any public statement on Iraq.

[1](#)2. (C) Owusu-Agyemang noted the confusion in the local media over a false report of a call from the Presidency to the White House expressing support for USG actions to disarm Iraq. There had been no such phone call made, he said. Additionally, in violation of the GOG's decision to remain silent publicly on Iraq, statements by a Presidency press spokesman stating that more time should have been given to UN inspectors had been repudiated by the Chief of Staff in later remarks to the press, he noted. Owusu-Agyemang said that the local "anti-war machinery" was in "overdrive," and his government had to exercise caution. However, in regard to any public demonstration that might threaten or impinge upon Mission activities (none are planned that this Mission is aware of), "it would be well contained."

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador also delivered reftel A demarche on Iraqi agents to the Foreign Minister, who pledged to communicate our concerns to GOG security forces "immediately." The Ambassador thanked the Minister for the fine level of cooperation on security matters. The Minister concluded by saying, "we recognize the depth of conviction of the United States on Iraq," and reaffirmed the GOG's cooperation on security matters. He said he would be briefing the President this afternoon on the details of these demarches.
YATES